

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 00603 01 OF 02 121852Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----130581 121856Z /50
O 121806Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1982

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 00603

NODIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT IT
SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION

REF: STATE 1988

1. AS WE, THE BRITISH ARE DISQUIETED BY TRENDS
IN ITALY. HOWEVER, OUR CONTACTS HAVE INCLINED TO A VIEW
OF SHORT-TERM TRENDS THAT SEEMS MORE RELAXED THAN OURS,
THOUGH IN NO SENSE DO THEY UNDERESTIMATE THE LONGER TERM
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEMSELVES, ITALY, EUROPE, THE US AND
THE ALLIANCE OF A DRIFT THAT LEADS TO COMMUNIST PARTICIP-
ATION IN A WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT. NONETHELESS,
SENIOR BRITISH OFFICIALS CHARACTERISTICALLY WOULD PREFER,
WE BELIEVE, TO SEE ITALY'S ALLIES NOT FLUSTER BUT RATHER
PURSUE AS ONE HMG SOURCE RECENTLY SAID, A "SERENELY
OPPORTUNISTIC" APPROACH GEARED TO THE EMERGING ITALIAN
SITUATION. IN THIS VEIN, WHILE WE BELIEVE THE BRITISH
WOULD SEE, AS DO WE AT EMBASSY LONDON, LITTLE VALUE IN
US PRESSURE IN THE FRENCH SITUATION, THEY WOULD LIKELY
SEE FIRMLY APPLIED LOW PRESSURE FROM WASHINGTON AS OF
VALUE IN INFLUENCING ITALY'S EVOLUTION IN THE PERIOD

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SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 00603 01 OF 02 121852Z

AHEAD.

2. BASED ON CASUAL RECENT SOUNDINGS, WE GAUGE THE FCO
HAS CONCLUDED THAT, WHILE THERE ARE PRESSURES IN ITALY
FOR A NEW POLITICAL FORMULA WHICH WOULD BRING THE PCI
INTO THE MAJORITY, THE POSITION OF THE PCI ITSELF IS
AMBIVALENT. WHILE PUBLICLY CALLING FOR A GOVERNMENT OF

NATIONAL EMERGENCY, AND REMAINING COMMITTED TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "HISTORIC COMPROMISE," PCI LEADERSHIP, THE BRITISH BELIEVE, IS NOT ANXIOUS TO PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT YET. RATHER, THE BRITISH ESTIMATE THAT THE PCI FEARS THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH A MOVE AND WOULD PREFER, THEREFORE, TO CONTINUE TO ALLOW THE SITUATION TO MATURE MORE SLOWLY TO A POINT WHERE THEIR ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT COULD BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT DRAMA. MOREOVER, NONE OF THE PARTIES WANT FRESH ELECTIONS, IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE BRITISH, AND THIS, TAKEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE GENERAL REALIZATION OF THE NEED OF CONTINUITY IN ORDER TO GRAPPLE WITH ITALY'S PROBLEMS, MAKES IT LIKELY THAT THE SOLUTION OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS WILL BE LIMITED TO A RE-SHUFFLE OF THE GOVERNMENT, WITH OR WITHOUT THE INCLUSION OF SOME "TECHNOCRATS" ACCEPTABLE TO THE PCI, AND WITH ANDREOTTI CONTINUING AS PRIME MINISTER. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, UK ANALYSTS BELIEVE IT POSSIBLE THAT A REVAMPED SIX-PARTY AGREEMENT COULD EMERGE THAT WAS WIDER AND MORE DETAILED IN SCOPE AND THAT ALL PARTIES COULD REPRESENT AS INCREASING THEIR INFLUENCE.

3. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION AS WELL THAT THE BRITISH SEE NO SPECIFIC STEPS THAT THE UK CAN TAKE TO INFLUENCE SIGNIFICANTLY DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALY. ON THE ONE HAND, STEPS THAT COULD BE TAKEN SHORT OF DIRECTLY
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 LONDON 00603 01 OF 02 121852Z

INTERFERING PROBABLY WOULD PROVE LARGELY INEFFECTIVE AND THOSE THAT MIGHT SHARPLY INFLUENCE EVENTS WOULD LIKELY BE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE. IN TERMS OF DIRECT INFLUENCE ON ITALY'S POLITICAL PARTIES, LABOUR GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP SHOWS NO SYMPATHY WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND OUR CONTACTS HAVE BEEN INCLINED GENERALLY TO WRITE-OFF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

4. IN TERMS OF LONGER-TERM, LOW-KEY ACTIONS, WE RECALL THAT DAVID OWEN'S NOVEMBER 18 SPEECH ON THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE UK. WE ASSUME AS WELL THAT IT WAS READ ELSEWHERE AS AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S STANCE ON WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNISM. THE SPEECH RAISED POINTED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXTENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE TO PLURALIST DEMOCRACY. OWEN ALSO CHALLENGED THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS TO BE OPEN AND SPECIFIC ABOUT CENTRAL ISSUES, INCLUDING HOW THE MONOLITHIC VERTICAL STRUCTURE OF THE

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PAGE 01 LONDON 00603 02 OF 02 121855Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 00603

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THREE MAIN COMMUNIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE DIFFERS
FROM THE RULING PARTIES OF EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET
UNION.

5. WHILE OWEN'S CHALLENGE HAS NOT RECEIVED THE SAME
ATTENTION AS STATEMENTS BY SENIOR US OFFICIALS, IT IS A
MATTER OF RECORD AND WE MIGHT URGE THE BRITISH IN DUE
COURSE TO REITERATE THESE POINTS. BUT WE DOUBT THEY
WOULD BE PREPARED TO TAKE OTHER PRACTICAL STEPS TO
INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALY.

6. GIVEN THE BRITISH PROCLIVITY TO UNDERSTATEMENT, WE
DO NOT RECOMMEND THAT WE URGE THEM TO MAKE EITHER
FRESH PUBLIC STATEMENTS OR DIRECT DEMARCHES TO GOI
OFFICIALS AT THIS STAGE. AMBASSADOR GARDNER'S WIDELY-
PUBLICIZED CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND THE US STATE-
MENT PLANNED FOR RELEASE JANUARY 12 (STATE 8082) WILL BE
NOTED CAREFULLY HERE AS A MANIFESTATION OF CURRENT US
CONCERN. THEY WILL ALSO SET THE STAGE FOR ANY FURTHER
STEPS WE EVENTUALLY MAY WANT TO ASK THE BRITISH TO TAKE
TO REINFORCE OUR OWN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EXPRESSIONS OF
CONCERN.

7. IN PLANNING FUTURE STRATEGY INVOLVING THE BRITISH,
WE ALSO WILL WANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THEY WILL LOOK TO
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SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 00603 02 OF 02 121855Z

THE US TO SERVE AS THE PRINCIPAL SPOKESMAN ON THESE
MATTERS, BOTH WITH THE ITALIANS AND IN ALLIED CIRCLES.
MOREOVER, IT WOULD BE UNPRODUCTIVE FOR US TO ASK THEM
TO WEIGH IN TOO HEAVILY AT ANY POINT, FOR THE CALLAGHAN
GOVERNMENT WILL RESIST DIRECT UK INTERFERENCE IN
THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF AN EC PARTNER.

8. SUGGEST YOU PASS THIS MESSAGE TO ADDRESSEES OF
REFTEL, AND THAT THEIR REPLIES BE SHARED WITH US.

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